

GERMAN TREATMENT OF WAR PRISONERS.

**TYPHUS AT WITTENBERG
CAMP.**

"DELIBERATE CRUELTY

AND NEGLECT."

IMPORTANT FOREIGN OFFICE REPORT.

Some startling revelations are made in the report just issued by the Foreign Office, through the medium of the Press Bureau, of the conditions obtaining at Westerbork Camp during the typhoid epidemic of last year. The report has been prepared by Mr. Justice Younger, Chairman of the Government Committee on the Treatment by the Enemy of British Prisoners of War, chiefly from information supplied by Major Priestley, Captain Vidal, and Captain Lander, all of the

R.A.M.C., who were sent to the camp soon after the outbreak of the epidemic, and who were only recently released from Germany. These three officers are, the report states, the only survivors of the six sent by the German authorities to take up at Wittgenberg Camp the place of duty abandoned by their own medical staff when the presence of typhus manifested itself among the prisoners under their charge.

The camp at Wittgenberg has a total area of about ten-and-a-half acres, and is subdivided into eight companies or compounds intended to be separated from each other, and so far as practicable. Every compound contains an infirmary, six wooden huts, a latrine

"In the early stages of the war and during the fever the camp was very full. The British prisoners numbered between 700 and 800. There was a much larger number of French and Belgian, but the Russians always greatly preponderated over all the others. It is believed that before and during the progress of the typhus there were at least 15,000 prisoners in the camp, and there may have been as many as 16,000 or 17,000—an enormous population for so restricted an area as ten-and-a-half acres.

THE BRITISH PRISONERS.

"The winter of 1914-15 was extremely severe, and the cold at Wittenberg intense.

but the heating arrangements for the camp were altogether inadequate. Often there was no coal for the stoves, and the temperature was so low that the men had always to keep a fire going in the kitchen to keep themselves warm. There was no food for the British prisoners but their overcoats taken from the Germans on the day of their capture, and none were given them in exchange. Their remaining clothes were often in rags, and some of the men had even to use their blankets as cloths. Occasionally a prisoner had received a thin cotton shirt, but there were many without either boots nor socks. Many others had their feet wrapped in straw. There were no means of washing the scanty clothing they had, no washhouse existing in the camp.

the time, or personal ablations there was only one trough or tap to each compound, and that was frequently frozen, while no hot water was available except that which came from the cookhouse. As a consequence, the status of the prisoners beggars description. Major Priestley found them gaunt, of a peculiar grey pallor, and verminous. The food with which the prisoners were supplied was bare and insufficient."

OUTBREAK OF THE EPIDEMIC.

"The spread of the typhus," the report states, "was much facilitated by a camp regulation, not confined to Wittenberg, which enjoined that the prisoners of all nationalities should be mixed together. Normally there

was only one mattress for every three prisoners, and every British prisoner was compelled to have one French and one Russian prisoner to share his mattress with him. The epidemic broke out in December, 1914. Thereupon the German staff, military and medical, precipitately left the camp, and thenceforward until the month of August, 1915, with few exceptions, no communication was held between the prisoners and the guards, except by means of direct messages, sent by means of the post office remaining outside the wire entanglements of the camp. All supplies for the men were pushed into the camp over the gates. The food for the hospital, and the medical officers was passed in on a trolley over about 20 yards of rail, worked by

The arrival of the British medical officers at the camp," the report states, "came about in the following way. From the month of November, 1914, 13 English doctors had been detained at Halle. They were none of them required for attendance upon their own men, and it is difficult to understand how they came to Geneva Convention, their continued detention being unjustifiable. Indeed, in direct defiance of the provisions of that Convention, these doctors were treated as ordinary prisoners of war, and the Committee cannot resist the suspicion that they were de-

berately denied by the German authorities to say that they might be made available, if needed, for work of danger in relief of their own staff. Be that as it may, after three months' inhuman detention, these doctors were, on the 10th February, 1915, informed that they were to be distributed amongst the other German camps, and particularly that six were required for the camp of Wittenberg.

down; some were lying on the floor, probably
succumbing to typhus. When they got into
the open air again Major Fry broke down.
The horror of it all was more than he could for-
the moment bear. Later in the evening Major
Priestley and Captain Vidal were directed to
go to two temporary hospitals outside the

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